

Press Freedom Status For Women Journalists

The month saw increased threats, intimidation, and denial of access across the globe

August 2023

Objective of report

Every day, worldwide, women journalists face severe threats to their safety. These threats exist online and offline, from misinformation and discrediting campaigns rooted in misogyny and sexism to more serious problems such as harassment from the state. The problems women journalists contend with are not broadly recognized. Newsrooms are often tight-lipped about them; governments take little action to counter violations against women journalists.

CFWIJ's monthly reports are drawn from our daily and feature research that offers a landscape view of what press freedom looks like from a gender angle. Each morning CFWIJ team register new violations against them, marshaling ever more evidence of the severity of the threats they face and the urgent need to raise awareness about these issues. Many of these cases are documented internally by The Coalition, to maintain anonymity and ensure the safety of targeted journalists. Our work shows the incredible courage and conviction women journalists work with in spite of the hurdles they face. Our job is to ensure their circumstances are made visible so accurate resources can be directed for their safety and growth.

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From Colombia to India, Brazil, the U.S., and Iran, women journalists faced serious threats to their ability to do their jobs and to their lives in August this year. The month saw increased threats, intimidation, and denial of access across the globe.

Carola Briceño, a Venezuelan journalist exiled to Colombia, is on her second hunger strike in less than one year to demand her refugee status is accepted. Sources confirmed with CFWIJ that she risks deportation to her home country, where her life is in danger.

Halfway across the globe from Colombia, a dead cat is left on Indian journalist Swati Chaturvedi's doorstep to intimidate her. CFWIJ worries the journalist is at imminent risk of violence and extrajudicial killing after accusations made by a politician triggered an onslaught of hate against Chaturvedi.

In Nigeria, journalist Karen James is forced into hiding after several anonymous sources threaten her and unidentified people attempt to take her life. All James did was exposing corruption and incompetence within the education system of the Anambra State.



Assassination Attempt on One Woman Journalist

Nigeria: Investigative journalist **Karen James** has become the target of multiple assassination attempts in the wake of her exposé on corruption within the Anambra Ministry of Education. Faced with grave concerns for her safety, James has sought refuge in a hidden location.

3 women journalists sentenced to prison, 4 arrested

Jordan: **Heba Abu Taha** was sentenced to three months for defaming an official body in a social media post. On Facebook, Abu Taha criticized events at Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem, accusing Jordanian King Abdallah of normalizing ties with Israel. Following her appeal, the journalist was released to await trial.

Iran: On Sunday, August 20, Iranian filmmaker and women's rights advocate **Mojgan Ilanlou** was arrested in Tehran following a summons from the intelligence police. Several news reports confirm that she was later transferred to Evin Prison, where she was held for 24 hours before being released on bail. This is Ilanlou's second arrest despite being granted amnesty earlier this year.

Ahead of the upcoming first anniversary of the nationwide protests that occurred in 2022, authorities have arrested and re-arrested a group of journalists and activists. Among them are **Elaheh Asgari**, **Matin Yazdani**, and **Jelveh Javaheri**, all known for their engagement in reporting and activism.

Mali: Malian authorities imposed a one-year sentence on **Rokia Doumbia**, an activist and influential figure on social media, for expressing criticism against the government online. Also known as #Madame vie chère, Doumbia has been actively advocating for change and speaking out about the high cost of living in the country. The severity of the sentence further underscores the challenging climate for those who dare to express their views in Mali.

Belarus: On August 31, the Gomel Regional Court sentenced former journalist **Larisa Shchyrakova** to 3.5 years in prison for "discrediting the Republic of Belarus" and "facilitating extremist activities." Shchyrakova was detained on December 6, 2022, after authorities raided her home. The month-long trial was held behind closed doors, leaving the public in the dark about the evidence presented against her.



Assassination
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Kazakhstan: On August 18, workers at ArcelorMittal Temirtau dragged journalist **Diana Saparkyzy** by her arms out of its mine in Karaganda. The assault happened after she interviewed relatives of miners who died in an accident. Workers also confiscated her recording equipment and deleted her footage. Police detained journalist **Sandugash Duysenova** in the Zhetysu region on August 11. During her time in police custody, Duysenova was forced to strip and was filmed by investigators, who tortured and humiliated her. They also threatened to harm her family if she did not confess to the charges against her.

Nigeria: On August 14, a group of six journalists visiting Opu-Nembe in Bayelsa State were attacked by an armed group and forced to flee from a violent assault. The reporter for Daar Communications, **Iniyekenime Bruce**, was stripped of her camera and phone by attackers and forced to hide in a nearby home for safety.

North Macedonia: TV Alsat's **Era Gjakova** and **Sara Hoxha** were filming a promo insert for a TV show in a public area in Skopje on August 21 when a barbershop owner assaulted them. The attacker emerged from his store wielding a pair of scissors and launched a verbal assault, threatening the lives of the journalists and cameraman.

"We were doing our job. We were recording in a public place in the Old Bazaar of Skopje without infringing on anyone's privacy, and without warning, one of the shop owners appeared and started threatening us, especially the cameraman."

-Era Gjakova




10 women journalists
physically assaulted

Syria: On August 23, a JIN TV vehicle was struck by a suspected Turkish drone, leaving its reporter **Dalila Agid** critically wounded and claiming the life of the driver Najm el-Din Faisal Haj Sinan. Agid sustained severe injuries to her neck and lost her left arm in the strike, she is currently in intensive care. The incident occurred on a road near Qamishli, a Kurdish city in northeast Syria.

Russia: On August 24, **Ranya Dridi**, a Palestinian journalist working for Al-Jazeera Arabic, was hit by a man during a live broadcast outside the former headquarters of the mercenary group Wagner in Saint Petersburg. The assailant demanded the journalist, who works for an Arabic language channel, speak Russian before attacking her. Dridi was taken to the hospital and diagnosed with a concussion.

Bolivia: On August 25, 2023, journalist **María Galindo** and producer Sergio Escalera were dragged, pulled, and beaten by workers and security personnel at Comibol Huanuni's mine headquarters, Loayza. They were gathering footage for a radio documentary when the assault happened. Both journalists sustained injuries as a result.

Ukraine: On August 30, Russian forces shelled a Radio Svoboda press crew in Donetsk, Ukraine, during their coverage of the war in eastern Ukraine. The crew members, including reporter **Yevhenia Kytayiva** and cameraperson **Anna Kudryavtseva**, were unharmed, but their car was severely damaged.



10 women journalists
physically assaulted

India: Harassment and threats against journalist **Swati Chaturvedi** follow Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Nishikant Dubey accusing the journalist of receiving financial support from China to tarnish India's reputation. After the politician's speech, Chaturvedi's contact details were shared on public WhatsApp groups. The journalist and her parents received hundreds of calls and messages containing rape and death threats culminating in a dead cat being left on her doorstep.

Montenegro: On August 8, deputy editor **Milena Aprcović** and editor Darko Šuković of Antena M radio portal in Montenegro received violent threats online. The commenter wrote that the journalists "should be eliminated" below an Antena M article on Facebook. In response, police swiftly identified the perpetrator and searched his home, during which they found an unlicensed weapon and 115 illegal bullets of various calibers.

Mexico: On August 8, at a press conference, Governor Jara Cruz accused **María Nivón Molano** and her news agency, Primera Línea MX, of spreading false information about the escalating violence in the state and suggested that she is involved in a "dirty war." He also claimed that a former governor has influence over her news outlet's editorial decisions. State officials further alleged that Molano has been untruthful about femicide and intentional homicide figures in Oaxaca.

Bolivia: On Monday, August 14, a group of hooded men forcibly entered and padlocked the Radio FMBolivia studio in La Paz. Reporter **Lesli Monroy** was threatened when she tried to intervene and prevent the men from taking the studio's equipment.



9 women journalists
threatened and
intimidated

Canada: A police officer grabbed and threatened journalist **Brandi Morin** with arrest as she reported on a raid of an environmental blockade on August 15. The award-winning journalist was documenting events as police forcibly removed and arrested protestors seeking to protect old-growth trees from logging at Fairy Creek Watershed on Vancouver Island.

Brazil: On August 15, a military police officer aimed a rifle at journalist **Danielle Zampollo** as she investigated killings during a police operation in Baixada Santista, São Paulo. The journalist was forced to flee to a nearby home to remove herself from the officer's line of sight.

“When he started to point the rifle at me and kept the gun pointed, I was surprised. I thought something was up. I look back, and there is no one. Just me, in a narrow alley. Then I saw that it was (aimed at) me. He stayed 17 seconds pointing the rifle at me, non-stop.”

-Danielle Zampollo



9 women journalists
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intimidated

Brazil: On August 15 in Espírito Santo, **Suellen Araújo**, a police reporter, was targeted with a barrage of online death threats. The onslaught was triggered by Colonel Alexandre Ramalho, the state secretary for Public Security and Social Defense, who posted a video online of his interview with Araújo in which he defended a deadly police operation.

Australia: Leaked WhatsApp messages reveal threats made by Carlo LoGiudice, a business partner of controversial neurosurgeon Charlie Teo, towards journalist **Kate McClymont** and The Sydney Morning Herald. The threats are believed to be in response to the publication of articles exposing illicit business activities, misconduct, high fees, and sexual harassment by Charlie Teo.

Bangladesh: Journalist **Fara Hossain** in Dhaka sought police protection on August 30 after she receiving threats from a religious extremist group. Hossain published reports on the group's illegal activities, prompting intimidation and harassment. She fears for her safety and has filed a complaint with the police.

“He came to my office before publication. At that time, they tried to harass me in various ways so that I would not publish the report.”

-Fara Hossain



9 women journalists
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Russia: In the Kremlin's latest attempt to suppress foreign media, longtime Russia correspondents **Eva Hartog**, and **Anna-Lena Laurén** are expelled from the country. The visa of Dutch journalist Hartog was denied by authorities and the POLITICO reporter was given six days to leave, she announced on August 7. The same week, journalist Anna-Lena Laurén, a Russia correspondent for Swedish outlets, announced that after 16 years reporting in Russia her accreditation was not renewed.

United States: On August 17, journalist **Brittany Hailer** filed a lawsuit against Allegheny County Jail, Pittsburgh arguing that gag rules impede urgent reporting necessary to inform the public about conditions and events at the jail. By preventing staff from speaking to the press without permission, meaningful public oversight and accountability are hindered. This lawsuit is believed to be the first of its kind brought by a journalist in the United States.

Russia: The Russian government has added 14 new journalists from the United Kingdom to its blacklist, barring them from the country on August 18. The list features prominent journalists, including BBC's **Marianna Spring**, Deborah Turness, and the Guardian's **Emily Bell**. The Kremlin accuses the journalists of fabricating "anti-Russia stories."

Columbia: Exiled journalist **Carola Briceño** has been on a hunger strike outside the UNHCR headquarters in Bogotá, Colombia. She seeks support for her refugee application status with the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Briceño fled to Colombia a few years ago after facing threats to her life and family. Despite multiple petitions, her refugee status has remained unresolved since February.

Nicaragua: Nicaraguan journalist **Kimberly León**, the director of Radio La Costeñísima, has been barred by Nicaraguan authorities from re-entering the country. León, who was on a family trip in the United States, was denied boarding a direct flight from Miami back to Nicaragua. The airline informed her that the Nicaraguan authorities had not granted her and her family permission to enter the country.

Serbia: Russian journalist **Natalya Tyshkevich**, who is living in exile in Germany, was detained at Belgrade airport in Serbia and denied entry by officials on August 7. Tyshkevich, who had been convicted in Russia for her critical reporting, was sent back to Malta after spending 40 hours in custody.



8 women journalists
arbitrarily denied
access



Slovakia: Controversial blogger Martin Daňo stalked and harassed renowned journalist **Monika Tódová**. Daňo, known for spreading disinformation, released an online series of offensive videos about Dennik N's Tódová, including doxxing the journalist by revealing her license plate and home address.

United Kingdom: On August 6, **Marianna Spring**, a correspondent for the BBC, revealed that she has become the primary target of online hate directed at the corporation, accounting for 80% of the abusive comments received. She has faced relentless harassment since 2020 for her work in exposing conspiracy movements.



2 women journalists
subjected to organized
troll campaign

United States: On August 2, a Washington D.C. federal court ordered former Fox News reporter **Catherine Herridge** to reveal her confidential sources. The case involves Herridge's reporting on an FBI investigation in 2017. Fox News and Herridge have argued that the subpoenas should be quashed under First Amendment protections. The decision could set a precedent affecting the entire news media and highlights the need for a federal shield law to protect journalists.

Russia: Ukrainian journalist **Yanina Sokolova** was added to Russia's "terrorist" wanted list by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on August 7. The specific charges against Sokolova have not been disclosed. On August 17, journalist **Oksana Asaulenko**'s home in Perm was raided by the Federal Security Services (FSB), who seized her phone. The raid was reportedly connected to a criminal case against Sergei Ukhov, the former coordinator of Alexei Navalny's Perm headquarters. Asaulenko has faced repeated harassment by Russian authorities, including fines for her reporting.

Ukraine: Ukrainian agricultural machinery company Technotorg is suing journalist **Mariana Metelska** for defamation after she reported on the company's dealings with Russia and Belarus, which defied sanctions. The editor of Volyn Online revealed on August 25 that company is demanding over \$20,000 in damages from the local Lutsk media outlet.

"This is pressure on journalists in Ukraine so that they are afraid to conduct investigations in the future."

-Mariana Metelska




7 women journalists
subjected to legal
harassment

Brazil: Journalist **Tai Nalon**, executive director of the fact-checking organization Aos Fatos, are accused by misinformation outlet Jornal da Cidade Online of engaging in unfair competition and defamation, seemingly utilizing the legal system in an effort to intimidate her. On August 22, Judge Marcelo Castro Anátocles da Silva Ferreira of the 6th Criminal Chamber of the State Court of Rio de Janeiro declined to dismiss the criminal complaint against Nalon.

Mexico: Journalist **Martha Olivia López** faces legal threats from former Tamaulipas Governor Francisco Cabeza de Vaca. The threats follow a story she reported about the discovery of human remains in clandestine graves on his property. The story was based on a March 2021 Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) report.

Italy: On August 4, a mafia boss serving life sentences in Italy filed a defamation lawsuit against journalists **Sandra Amurri** and Massimo Giletti. The journalists are being investigated by the Terni prosecutor's office after the lawsuit was filed by Giuseppe Graviano, a notorious Cosa Nostra boss. The lawsuit is believed to be connected to an episode of a TV show where Giletti interviewed a member of the Graviano brothers' mafia.



7 women journalists
subjected to legal
harassment

4 women journalists laid-off

United States: For a first in 14 years. The Texas Tribune, a non-profit news organization, laid off several of its staff members, including journalists **Alexa Ura** and **Jolie McCullough**, copy chief **Emily Goldstein**, copy editor **Beth Bond**, and the entire copy desk.

A woman journalist deported

Nicaragua: Nicaragua's General Directorate of Migration and Immigration (DGME) has deported Honduran journalist **Kenia Gonzalez** on the grounds of "defending" Christians. Shortly after crossing the border from Honduras to Nicaragua at Las Manos, Gonzalez was apprehended by DGME. She was presented with a document stating that her expression of concern regarding the government's crackdown on Christians posed a "threat."

A woman journalist illegally transported across border

Russia: Imprisoned Ukrainian human rights defender and citizen journalist **Iryna Danylovych**, was unlawfully deported to colony No. 7 in Zelenokumsk, Stavropol, Russia. Prison administration refused to provide Danylovych with prescribed pain medication for her ear condition, resulting in a complete loss of hearing in her left ear.



4 women journalists
laid-off, 1 deported, 1
illegally transported
across border



Attacks on a woman
journalist's equipment,
property, workplace
harassment on one



Attacks on a woman journalist's equipment

Kazakhstan: On August 22 in Mangistau, award-winning journalist **Saniya Toiken**'s drone was destroyed by a man while she was reporting on a power plant. The incident was captured on surveillance cameras, but the police failed to act.

Attacks on a woman journalist's property

India: On August 30, **Khushboo Akhtar**'s family home in New Delhi was set on fire, leading to extensive damage. Akhtar, who has been vocal about receiving threats for her journalism work, believes this attack was a deliberate attempt to silence her.

A woman journalist subjected to workplace harassment

Spain: Journalist Peio Riaño has been cut off by leading digital newspaper elDiario.es after allegations of workplace harassment after a woman journalist shared her distressing encounters with the then editor-in-chief during her time at a well-known "national left-wing newspaper."



United States: On August 11, law enforcement officers and sheriff's deputies conducted an unprecedented raid at **Marion County Record** newspaper in Kansas, seizing files, computers, and other materials from the newspaper's office, owner's home, editor's home, and a city councilwoman's residence.



Police Raid on Local Newspaper



**CFWIJ is working hard to change these
circumstances everyday.**
Join us in this mission



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